

VZCZCXRO5122  
PP RUEHLN RUEHVK RUEHYG  
DE RUEHDBU #0525 0791300  
ZNR UUUUU ZZH  
P 201300Z MAR 06  
FM AMEMBASSY DUSHANBE  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 7008  
INFO RUCNCIS/CIS COLLECTIVE  
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC  
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHINGTON DC  
RHEHAAA/NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL WASHINGTON DC  
RUEHAK/AMEMBASSY ANKARA 1460  
RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING 1493  
RUEHRL/AMEMBASSY BERLIN 1481  
RUEHIL/AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD 1438  
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RUEHBS/USEU BRUSSELS 0826  
RUEHDBU/AMEMBASSY DUSHANBE 8152

UNCLAS DUSHANBE 000525

SIPDIS

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STATE FOR SCA/CEN

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [ECON](#) [SOCI](#) [TI](#)

SUBJECT: TAJIKISTAN: CITY CONTINUES DEMOLITION, TARGETS BUSY MARKET

¶1. Dushanbe Mayor Mahmdsaid Ubaidulloyev signed an order to level a busy market for the construction of two new four-story apartment buildings. Tarrakiet Development owns the Rohi Abreshim market, more commonly known as the "82nd Bazaar" due to its location in the 82nd district of Dushanbe. The city ordered Tarrakiet Development, the property owner, to tear down all market stalls within two months.

¶2. Last October, the Tajik Supreme Economic Court declared the market illegal. Dushanbe city officials point out the market's buildings and stalls were constructed without city permission and do not meet city architectural and safety standards. Officials claim that businessmen operating at the market will be able to re-open their stalls at other markets around the city. However, it is unlikely they will relocate. Some merchants have told Embassy sources they will seek work in Russia and join the one million other labor migrants from Tajikistan.

¶3. When EmbOff visited the 82nd market March 19. Visible demolition had not yet begun. However, some stalls were vacant, and the normally crowded market had noticeably less patrons. The market's destruction would reportedly put 3,500 people out of work. Merchants are outraged. Rumors of a pending destruction started eight years ago. However, merchants dismissed the rumors as years passed without any actions taken. Many will not be able to sell their inventory within the next two months and will suffer large financial losses. Because of the illegal status of the stalls and small shops, the government will not compensate vendors.

¶4. Embassy staff heard unconfirmed rumors President Rahmonov's daughter would build new apartments on the market's site. Others speculate that owners of the nearby new and modern "Ganjina" shopping complex encouraged the demolition to eliminate competition and drum up businesses. Government officials and wealthy businessmen from Kulob, President

Rahmonov's home region, have purchased most of the space in the "Ganjina" complex but have been unable to rent out the shops and stalls. A Ganjina stall costs \$100 each month, a high sum for the average small merchant.

15. COMMENT: The 82nd bazaar is only the latest victim of government-ordered demolition during Dushanbe's unprecedented construction boom. Homes, hospitals, civic organizations, and businesses have been or are in the process of being torn down around the new presidential palace to create a park. A popular restaurant valued at \$50,000 will be torn down, and the owner will not be compensated. Even the historic Russian Military Hospital on Rudaki Avenue is being forced to move for new development. The government and its crony developers will need to pay close attention that their haste for visible economic growth doesn't breed too much political resentment among citizens. END COMMENT.

HOAGLAND